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Former CIA agent blasts Nicaragua involvement

By ADAM SCHOR
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A former CIA agent, calling Central America a "Vietnam quagmire," predicted Tuesday that the United States would invade Nicaragua if President Reagan is re-elected.

Ralph McGehee, an agent for 25 years, said the CIA already has begun to stockpile arms in neighboring Honduras and to install the equipment to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

"President Reagan is dedicated to the overthrow of the Sandinista government," McGehee said in an interview after a press conference at Boise State University. "All command structures and logistic structures are being (put in place)."

The attack, which McGehee predicted would not come until after Reagan's inauguration, would be a swift, large-scale sea and air operation similar to the invasion of Grenada.

"The Pentagon is convinced that the American public will not tolerate a long, drawn-out battle. The war will be over before the American Congress and the American people can protest," he said.

"Probably we are getting into a 'Vietnam quagmire' situation, with leftists in El Salvador, Nicaragua and guerrilla fighters in Guatemala and Honduras," said McGehee, who spoke before more than 200 people at BSU Tuesday night.

Though the invasion will not go as quickly as the one in Grenada, McGehee said, there is little doubt of an American victory.

"Many of the Nicaraguans are

Ralph
McGehee



... says
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going to take to the hills and begin guerrilla warfare," he said. "With our military might and the small population of Nicaragua, ultimately we assume we will win."

"There will be many casualties, both Americans and Nicaraguans."

McGehee said Nicaragua is anticipating an invasion, and has increased the size and preparation of its military forces. The government has begun building trenches around the bigger cities.

McGehee compared the CIA activities in Central America with past covert actions, including the Bay of Pigs and the 1976 invasion of Angola. Both cases involved the use of Alabama National Guard members as CIA undercover agents, he said.

The two men killed in Nicaragua when their helicopter was shot down early this month were members of the Alabama National Guard, McGehee said. Though the government called the men civilians, McGehee said the men were "obviously CIA mercenaries."